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The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, *August* 4. 1691.

Quest. 1. *WHether the present offers at a Reformation are like to prove effectual? and what are the best methods to detect the vile haunts and practices of those Lewd Women called* Night-walkers.

Answ. To answer this, wou'd be a Task adapted to the Genius of better Pens than any of our Society to engage in: But since some Persons of no *mean Quality* have been pleas'd to command our thoughts upon it, (perhaps because of the publick spreading of our Papers, which we cou'd wish as general as the Subject) we humbly offer what follows, and not without Encouragement, when the best *Commanders lead the way*, and where the first attempts carry the face of Victory.—We shall first premise,

That *Divine Providence* (according to the Schools) *is the reason of Order to some End.* 'Twou'd be too large a Discourse to show how *the Providence of God is not in respect of himself; for whatever is in him, is the end, and not, tending to the end. How the measures of contingency and necessity fall under the Providence of God, and not of the Creature. How God superintends all things immediately as to the Ratio of Order, but mediately as to the Execution of Order. How particular Causes depend upon general ones: And how the Fate and Revolutions of Kingdoms, and particular Persons are effected.* But these have been learnedly treated upon by abler Pens, and we shall only so far interfere with 'em, as to remark, that a particular change of Providence has appear'd in Their present Majesty's happy Accession to the Crown, since the Effects do so manifestly evince it. To pass over his Majesty's late *Personal Dangers*, and the daily exposing his Royal Person to more, and this when he might sit down with Honour enough. To wave the thought of an *afflicting Absence from the partner of his Fate and Glories*, and that all the Charms of rest and satisfaction are too weak to struggle with his *great Resolves*. When we see all these Motives ineffectual, and that he yet pushes on further, we may be bold (in a better sence than once) to believe, *That for this End God raised him up*, and designs to act by him more than we yet see, perhaps more than we can reasonably hope for, tho we are *naturally extravagant enough in our Expectations.* But that which yet more reasonably induces us to this Belief, is, the Exemplary Piety which perfects Their Majesties other happy Qualifications. Never had this Nation a greater want of two *Crowned Heads* in't than now; Providence knew it, and by the All-wise disposal of Causes brought about such a Blessing: Nay more, begins to bless that Blessing with a *Communicative Influence upon the Subject. Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus*: Claudian: When Crowned Heads begin to lead the way, 'tis an Argument conclusive with the Subject, and obliging to Imitation. Their Majesty's well knew that Religion *fixes Crowns, makes happy their People, and renders the Sword victorious.* And 'tis to be hoped, a Victory may not be more difficult over the Vices of their own Subjects, (when 'tis their Interest too) than the restoring the *Liberties*, and *peace of Christendom*; 'tis already begun in both, and we have one remarkable Instance of the agreeableness of both together, in which every one that is not wilfully blind may plainly see the Finger of God, I mean the late Action at *Aghrim* in *Ireland*. On *Fryday* Her Majesty's Letter about suppressing the modern Vices of our Age, came to *Hick's Hall*, on *Saturday* the Justices made their Order of Sessions, and on *Sunday* an *Irish* Army, really greater than that at the *Boyn*, and much more advantagiously posted, was totally routed by our *English* Army, almost two thirds less than that at the *Boyn*. *'Tis no small Encouragement to push on a Work which Heaven was so willing to joyn in, that it had almost prevented our Duty.*

And it appears to us, that there's a more particular and immediate hand of God in the prosecution of this Reformation, than every one guesses at; for there seems to be a *super-induc'd Spirit*, an extraordinary disposition amongst the good and *great Men of our Age*, to prosecute the Affair with an unheard of vigour. The design is yet laid deeper than is generally thought, for the Officers themselves will be so look'd after, that the least connivance on their part will be severely check'd. But the promising Indications of success are yet greater, when an *Assignation of many Persons of Quality*, (of which it may justly be believ'd Her Majesty in this Juncture is the *Patroness*) does actually meet to concert Measures about the effectual suppressing of such Grievances to the Government, and publick Good—A Petty Sessions is held weekly in *Bloomsbury Court-house* and *Hicks's Hall*, by a number of worthy *Justices*, for the Conviction of such Offendors: and the like is now a beginning to be set up in the Liberty of *Westminster*. Fit Persons are appointed and placed in proper districts all over the *City* and Suburbs to take *Informations*, and fill up Warrants *gratis*, to carry to the Magistrate to ease him of all trouble, which he will also sign *gratis*. Her majesty has Commanded the Officers over all the Horse and Foot, that they keep a strict eye upon the Souldiers, and prevent the common Wickedness and disorders amongst them. Every Body knows of the *anonymous Abstract of the Laws and Penalties.*

And 'tis observable, the last *Lords Day*, (July 26.) that some Persons disaffected to the present Government, in contempt of the late *Order for Reformation*, went to drink Wine at the *Horse-shoe* Tavern in *Drury-lane*; being there refused admittance, they went to another House in the same street, where they drank themselves all so dead drunk, that one of them *never awoke*, and the Master of the House will be prosecuted according to Law. There is now an Order preparing to be publish'd by my *Lord Mayor*, for encouraging a *Reformation in the City*, which will be out in some few days. And for a more effectual suppression of Debauchery, *Orders* are already come forth, that *Bartholomew Fair* shall be kept but three days. We reserve yet a fuller Answer to this *Grand Query* about the *present Reformation*, together with some *Secret Occurrences* (that will be communicated to us) for the Subject of another Paper: Only we shall mention one thing more, *viz.* That there is a *Member* of one of the *four Societies of the Law*, who has not been asham'd to declare publickly in a *Coffee-house*, that all this *noise is Cheat*, and a trick of the Justices to get money, and that he wou'd give 2000 *l.* for what they shou'd get by it this Year, which is a *scandalous Untruth*, for we can assure him that there has been already *seven score Warrants* granted, for which neither any *Justice*, nor his *Clerk*, have had one farthing for Fees. And things are so well manag'd, that in 10000 *Warrants*, which perhaps may be granted before a twelve month expires, it shall not be in the power of the Officers themselves that levy the penalties to cheat 5 *s.*

None of these Instances are Secrets, but Publick Occurrences; and besides these, there will be yet found *deeper Measures* on foot, which we doubt not by the Blessing of God will effectually contribute to the Peace and Piety of this Kingdom. *Other Ages have acted by halves, and play'd with Reformations*, but never did any show such readiness and practice in this Affair: Never was there a Cause wherein Vertue, Glory, Liberty, and all that is dear to the Good and Great, did joyn together like the beginnings of this Reign: Never was there happier Foundations a laying for a happy Government; and if we may be allow'd to *judge of Effects from proper Causes*, we may boldly averr, *That the* Crisis *of* Englands *Happiness is now Commenc'd.*

Among all the Obstructions that lye in the way of these *new Measures*, the Calumny of the word *Informer* is like to be the greatest, but upon what unreasonable grounds we shall soon make appear.— The *first Objection* we meet with, is, *The very word* Informer *carries a Baseness and Odium in its Sound.* ——To this we Answer, That Words are always expressive of Actions and Things; therefore the true Estimate of *Words* is taken from the Nature of *Things* whereof they are expressive: This must be granted, or all Converse and Civil Society is destroyed. 'Tis much below the dignity of Intelligent Beings to make no distinction betwixt Names and Things. Perhaps, if the rise of the word *Informer* were search'd, you'd find it as old as the *first Persecution*, when the Christians, by Heathenish Informers lost both their Lives and Estates, which truly was enough to entail a *Curse of Ignominy upon the Name*; but 'tis an ill Argument to say, because it was once an Enemy to *Vertue*, it may not be so to *Vice*. The Argument indeed lyes stronger here, either Persons may make use of it for Vice or Vertue, (*for all Words and Actions are included under one of them two*:) Those therefore that wou'd not make use of it to a Vertuous end, shew what they wou'd do if they had opportunities to do it to the contrary: I leave the *Objectors* themselves to make the Application, and be their own Judges.

The *Second Objection* is, *That an Informer is a Treacherous Person.*

—To

——To which we easily Answer, as before, That we must take our Measures from the Nature and not the Name of Actions: But we add, That the publishing the Abstract of the *Laws* and *Penalties* has put every Criminal into a *Posture of Defence*: So that if for the future they act contradistinctly to the Measures of Government, they are properly *Traytors to themselves*; and since such Actions are indisputably against the Peace and Welfare of the Government, all Persons that are not *Informers* against such Actions, when they have opportunities, are guilty and accessary themselves by *Misprision*. A *Government* may, for our better insight into this matter, be represented to a *Great Family where the King is the Father*: Now for a Son to be in this House, and over-hear the Plots and Conspiracies of some in the House against his Father's Life, the Ruine of the Estate, Firing the Premises, or any other Outrages which will mightily disturb, if not ruine the Family, the *Informer* in this case may appeal to our *Objectors* against the Merit of the Title.

The *Third Objection*, is, *That such an Action is Base and Little.* ——Answer: We may know an Action whether it is base or not, according to its repugnancy to the Ends of a Rational Creature; but it all just and warrantable means to preserve *Vertue, Liberty, Laws, and all that is dear to Good Men*, be a *baseness*, then such an Action is base; but if the End of Man be *Ignominy, Ruine, and all that's abherrent to his Nature*, much good may it do those Persons that plead for't.

The *Fourth Objection* is; *That since the word* Informer *is in ill repute by Custom and false Opinions, might there not be some better way propos'd to reclaim the Vices and Irregularities complained of?* ——To which we Answer: Common Prudence obliges us not to censure what we can't amend, especially where *Authority* is immediately concerned; though we doubt not but the Design is so fixt, and the Prosecution of these *modern Vices* so much resolv'd on, that, to shorten the Work, and make it easier, they would gladly accept of *better Proposals in order to it, if the Objector can offer such.* We have yet met with no other *Objections*, and probably all others that can be rais'd, may come under some of these Heads; which when considered, we desire every *Objector* to lay by his Prejudices, and use his *Reason*, in their Examination.

But the best Answer to all the Objections that can be made against the Ignominy of the word *Informer*, is, That those worthy Magistrates who *zealously* espouse this Cause, have already manifested their Resolution to use the utmost *severity of the Law* against all Persons whatsoever who shall opprobriously call any Person herein concern'd, *an Informer*; and accordingly have already for the said Offence Bound-over such Persons to the *General Quarter-Sessions*, where they have been Indicted as Disturbers of the Publick Peace, and *Obstructers of Justice*; Fined, and Bound to their Good-behaviour. And a *Constable*, for refusing to execute a Warrant for the *seizing of Fruit* publickly expos'd to sale on the Lord's-day, was the day following, at the General Sessions, in open Court, *turn'd out of his Office*, and this not ten days since. All the Charges incident to such Prosecutions at the King's Suit (where the *Statute of Maintenance* cannot reach) as well as all other Charges hereto relating, are defray'd by those worthy Societies before mentioned.

We shall here, according to our Promises in our former Advertisements, subjoyn the short Account of the Six Nights Rambles *sent us; and we hope not impertinently, since 'tis to expose one of the Capital Grievances against which the late* Proclamation *is level'd.*

'THe *first Night* I travers'd the *Pall-Mall*, and read the 'Face of every unmask'd Lady I met; and if mask'd, I 'started some Question that still gave me an Indication of their 'Temper, endeavouring to light upon as *refin'd*, yet *modest* '*piece of Wickedness* as I could; at last having made (as I thought) 'the *best of the Market*, away we walk'd to drink upon the '*Bargain*. So after several Glasses, and some little insignificant Prittle-prattle, I fix'd my Eyes upon her, and said,— '*Madam, Methinks I read some Lines and Characters of Goodness in your Face which are not yet absolutely defac'd: Your Education, I'm confident, has not been unhappy: Pray be free, and tell me, Are you yet Proof against the Lashes of your Conscience?* Sir (said she) your Design I know not, but I dare not believe it 'to be ill, you having made such an inquisitive Prologue. 'No indeed (replied I) my Request proceeds purely from a '*generous pity* at your Misfortunes, which are sufficiently slavish. Alas Sir! (said she, and sigh'd) 'tis a slavish Riddle, to '*chuse what I hate*; I have repeated these Actions, but never 'without regret and self-abhorrency for such a folly: — This 'I had peculiar to my self, that I never was Mercenary, thinking it a greater baseness to *sell* my Heaven, than *give* it; I 'was first betray'd by keeping company with a Lady that was 'not *over modest*, but not thinking to engage my self, till one 'of her Gallants weaken'd my Resolves, and at last—— 'I know not what; but I was ruin'd, for all my Resolves are 'now too weak to resist, never being able to hold out a quarter of a year together; *but secure my Honour for this once by secrecy*, and not watching me to my Lodgings: And I hope the '*Novelty of this Enterprize* may have new Effects upon me, and 'keep me from doing such Actions as must be repented of, or 'I am undone.

'The next attack was a *City-Madam*, with a melancholly 'Air in her face, which put me upon acting as follows: 'After having drank a Glass or two, she began to draw a 'little too near me; whereupon I rose up, and with as se'vere a Look as I cou'd affect, I said; *Madam, keep off, you 'think I'm Flesh and Blood, and I doubt not but that I imitate it 'near enough to deceive your eyes; assure your self I am not 'what I appear: Reclaim your Whoredoms, or you are lost; you 'have but a little time left, make good use of it; if you are otherwise resolv'd, view these Features, and expect me to be a witness 'against you at the day of Judgment.* Here she wax'd pale and 'swounded away, and as soon as she came to her self again 'I left her; and enquiring the *next day* about her, I heard 'she took me for a Spirit, and was resolv'd to follow the advice of her *strange Monitor.*

'The third was a *Savoy-Bird*, well skill'd in *Confidence and 'the depth of Pockets*, but so simple and foolish in all her An'swers, that I think *nothing can reclaim her but Afflictions.* — 'Such Wretches perhaps may deserve a particular way of '*treating* in the new measures of Reformation.

'The next Enterprize was an old Friend, a *Companion of mine*, whom 'I overtook caressing a Lady near the *May-pole* in the *Strand*; but being 'not certain, I kept behind 'em till they came to *S——lane*, where 'seeing 'em turn down, I made a halt, and they came up again presently 'into the *Strand*; so resolving to be satisfy'd, I made up to 'em, and by 'asking *What is't a Clock*, discover'd the truth of the matter; the La'dy finding my acquaintance with my Friend, scowr'd off; and he seeing 'himself discover'd, *begg'd my Silence*, and promis'd a Reformation, 'which I hope he has kept to ever since, having given me such satisfacti'on as argues his Sincerity in this affair.

'The fifth Engagement occasion'd this *Confession*, That she had an easie '*tender Education*, but her Brother grew Extravagant, and instead of 'paying hers and her Sisters Portions, he spent all, and she having no 'way left to get her Bread, and *not being able to work, took up this Course*, 'which (said she) at first was very afflicting and uneasie to my Conscience, 'but has worn off by degrees; tho after all I could wish I had begg'd, 'rather than liv'd thus dissatisfy'd; for I have lost my Credit, *am asham'd 'of my Friends, afraid of my Enemies*, and which is yet worse, see no 'Probability of living under better Circumstances all my Life, and must 'dye without hopes of mending it in the other World.

'The sixth and *last Enterprize* was so like the *Story of Papinian's 'converting a Harlot*, that I shall tell that only, perhaps not yet known to every body: 'He put on the Habit of a Souldier, and went to an in'famous House, and choosing his Woman, he desired to go with her 'into a private Room, where none might see him; she brought him into 'a Chamber, which he objects against, as not private enough; she brings 'him into another, against which he also objects; at last she brings him 'into the most private Room in the House: he looks about every way, 'and asks if they were secure there? and if none saw 'em? She answer'd, '*None but God or the Devil.* And believest thou, saith he, that there 'is a God? She answered, *Yes.* And believest thou that he is every 'where present, and seeth all things? She answer'd, She did believe it. 'And shall we (said he) sin so shamefully under the Eye of the most *Just 'Judge* that seeth all things? Hereupon she had nothing to say for her 'self, but fetched a deep Sigh, being asham'd of her wicked Life, lived 'afterwards on Bread and Water, and not daring to take the Name of 'God into her mouth, but frequently repeated these words, *Thou who 'hast made me, have Mercy on me*, and so she continued three years 'and dyed. To this Conviction *our present Instance* agrees, and we are 'not without hopes of like effects in the rest. *Gentlemen*, if the Time 'and Moneys spent in these *six Nights Rambles*, may reclaim or hinder 'the Debauchery of one *single* Person, I shall think it all worth my labour.

We might be fuller in our Accounts of this Nature, and of the Methods of redressing such Evils, but a worthy Gentleman, who is very Instrumental in this begun Reformation, has already drawn up an *Act*, which is printed, and Intituled, *An Act for the more effectual restraining and suppressing of divers notorious sins, and Reformation of the Manners of the People of this Nation*; which 'tis hoped the next Sessions of Parliament will take a particular notice of, in order to the Ends designed by it.

*** *If any of our* Querists *meet with any remarkable* Occurrences *or Scruples relating to the* New Reformation *now so vigorously carrying on; if they direct them to the* Athenian Society *at the* Rotterdam Coffee-House *in* Finch-lane, *or at* Smith's Coffee-House *in* Stocks-Market, *they shall be added in our* Weekly Mercuries, *with our own Thoughts thereupon.*

Advertisement.

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